AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-15 (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended)   A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first year user and a second user over the Internet, said first and second users being associated with a first realm and a second realm respectively each said realm being accessible via the Internet using a protocol characteristic to said realm, each said user getting access to the Internet via one of a respective first and second device, at least one of said first and second devices having a storage media storing the protocol characteristic of the other realm, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a current IP address of the second user;

establishing a connection between said first and second users using said current IP address and said protocol characteristic as part of an instant messaging session; and

encrypting, as between the devices, an instant message during the instant messaging session.

17. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 further including sending a message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user is online.

18. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 wherein said step of determining said current IP address comprises retrieving said address from an IM database.

19. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 further comprising sending a connection request from the first to the second device for establishing said instant message session.

20. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 19 further comprising generating a response to said connection request by said second device accepting said connection request.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 16 further comprising displaying a window on the screen of said first and second devices, said window indicating a list of active users.

Claims 23 – 102 (Cancelled)

103. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 22 further comprising

displaying said window with a message area, said message area being used to indicate

messages between said users.

104. (Cancelled)

105. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim ~~104~~ 16, wherein at least one of

said devices is a handheld computer.

106. (Currently Amended)   The method of claim ~~104~~ 16, wherein at least one of

said devices is a palmtop computer.

107. (Currently Amended)   .The method of claim ~~104~~ 16, wherein at least one of

said devices is a WebTV device.

108. (Currently Amended)   A method of conducting an instant messaging

session, the method comprising:

establishing an instant messaging session over an Internet protocol network between a first user device and a second user device, each said user device corresponding to a user name, each said user name corresponding to a different realm, ~~each said realm having a protocol characteristic to the realm,~~ each said user device having an Internet protocol address in the realm corresponding to the user name; and

encrypting, as between the devices, communications in the instant messaging session.

109. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

110. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

111. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

112. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting an instant messaging session between a first user and a second user over the Internet,

~~said first user associated with a first realm having a first Instant Messaging protocol,~~

~~said first user connected to the Internet using said first Instant Messaging~~

~~protocol, said second user associated with a second realm having a second Instant~~

~~Messaging protocol,~~

~~said second user connected to the Internet using said second Instant Messaging~~

~~protocol,~~

the method comprising the steps of:

<u>retrieving an instant messaging protocol suitable for communications with said</u>

<u>second user from a database accessible to the first user;</u>

~~determining a current IP address for said second user;~~ and

establishing a connection from said first user to said second user using ~~said~~

~~current IP address and said second Instant Messaging~~ <u>instant messaging</u> protocol as part

of an instant messaging session.

113. (Currently Amended)   A method of conducting an instant messaging

session between a first user and a second user over the Internet,

~~said first user associated with a first realm having a first Instant Messaging~~

~~protocol,~~

~~said first user connected to the Internet using said first Instant Messaging~~

~~protocol,~~

~~said second user associated with a second realm having a second Instant~~

~~Messaging protocol,~~

~~said second user connected to the Internet using said second protocol Instant~~

~~Messaging,~~

the method comprising the steps of:

retrieving one of a plurality of instant messaging protocols, the one instant

messaging protocol being suitable for communications with said second user from a

database accessible to the first user;

~~determining a current IP address for said second user;~~ and

displaying an instant message from said first user to said second user using ~~said~~

~~current IP address and said second Instant Messaging~~ instant messaging protocol.

114. (Currently Amended)   An instant message receiving system, said system

including:

a first user device connected to an Internet Protocol network and associated with a

first Internet Protocol address, a first user name, and a first realm; and

a second user device connected to said Internet Protocol network and associated

with a second Internet Protocol address, a second user name, and a second realm wherein

said second user device receives ~~an~~ key-encrypted instant message from said first user

device.

115. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114, wherein at least one of

said devices is a handheld computer.

116. (Previously Presented)   The system of claim 114, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

117. (Previously Presented)   The system of claim 114, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

118. (Currently Amended)   A method for receiving an instant message, said method including:

transmitting an ~~encrypted~~ instant message from a first user device connected to an Internet Protocol network and associated with a first Internet Protocol address, a first user name, and a first realm; and

receiving said ~~encrypted~~ instant message at a second user device connected to said Internet Protocol network and associated with a second Internet Protocol address, a second user name, and a second realm<u>; wherein the instant message is encrypted as between the user devices</u>.

119. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

120. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

121. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 118, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

122. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114 wherein said first realm employs a first protocol characteristic, said second realm employs a second protocol characteristic, and wherein said first protocol characteristic is different from said second protocol characteristic.

123. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 114 further including sending a message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user device is online.

124. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 114 further comprising displaying a window on the screen of said first and second user device, said window indicating a list of active user devices.

125. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 118 wherein said first realm has a protocol ~~employs a first protocol characteristic, said second realm employs a second protocol characteristic, and wherein said first protocol characteristic is different from said~~

~~second protocol characteristic~~ <u>and said second realm has a protocol, said protocols being</u> <u>different.</u>

126. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 118 further including sending a message to an IM database indicating the corresponding user device is online.

127. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 118 further comprising displaying a window on the screen of said first and second user devices, said window indicating a list of active user devices.

Please add new claims as follows:

128. (New)   System for instant messaging, the system including:

a first Internet service provider;

a second Internet service provider;

a user name associated with the first Internet service provider; and

a second user name associated with the second Internet service provider;

wherein each said user name corresponds to a respective device enabled to conduct an instant messaging session over the Internet, said instant messaging session being encrypted as between the devices.

129. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein the devices are enabled by a prior communication of an encryption key.

130. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein the instant messaging session is facilitated by forming a relay connection.

131. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein the instant messaging forming a peer-to-peer connection.

132. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers comprises a portal instant messaging provider.

133. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers comprises a general instant messaging provider.

134. (New)   The system of claim 129, wherein the instant messaging session is facilitated by forming a relay connection.

135. (New)   The system of claim 129, wherein the instant messaging forming a peer-to-peer connection.

136. (New)   The system of claim 129, wherein the Internet service providers comprise portal instant messaging providers.

137. (New)   The system of claim 129, wherein the Internet service providers comprise general instant messaging providers.

138. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

139. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

140. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

141. (New)   The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a handheld computer.

142. (New)   The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a palmtop computer.

143. (New)   The system of claim 129, wherein at least one of said devices is a WebTV device.

144. (New)   The system of claim 128, further including:

a third Internet service provider; and

a third user device associated with a user name at the third Internet service provider,

wherein the third user device participates in the instant messaging session, the session being encrypted as between the devices.

145. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein the first device provides a friends list including the Internet service provider of the second user and a user name of the second user.

146. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein the first user device retrieves an instant messaging protocol suitable for communications with said second user device from a database accessible to the first user device.

147. (New)   The system of claim 128, wherein at least one of the Internet service providers provides Internet telephone service.

148. (New) The method of claim 112, wherein said establishing a connection

includes establishing a connection with an Internet service provider that provides Internet

telephone service.

149. (New) The method of claim 16, wherein said realms comprise Internet

service providers.

150. (New) The method of claim 112, further including encrypting the instant

messaging session, as between a user device of the first user and a user device of the

second user.

151. (New) The method of claim 113, further including encrypting the instant

messaging session, as between a user device of the first user and a user device of the

second user.